



Dear Deborah,

Kia ora and welcome to our first newsletter where we bring you the latest updates on the freshwater farm plan certifier and auditor programme. These newsletters will be sent at the beginning of each month, so feel free to share with others who may be interested in the programme, and we will add them to the recipient list.

It is great to have you alongside us on this journey. We know you have been waiting to hear more information and we are pleased to be able to share details about the programme with you - we are excited to announce that the new website is now live, and we are ready to receive applications.

In this month's newsletter we cover:

- [Background to the appointment programme](#)
- [Introduction to the team](#)
- [Key dates and timelines - website live!](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [How to contact us](#)

### Programme overview

Freshwater farm plans are a key delivery tool of the 2020 Essential Freshwater Package with the aim to:

- stop further degradation to freshwater and freshwater ecosystems
- start making immediate improvements
- help deliver healthy freshwater ecosystems within a generation.

The Resource Management (Freshwater Farm Plan) regulations released in June 2023 outline the frequency for certification and audit of freshwater farm plans. They state that plans will need to be certified after 18 months of the regulations applying in each region, and then every 5 years. Plans will then require an initial audit within 12 months of the initial certification and subsequent audits depending on the audit grade.

You may be aware that freshwater farm plan regulations are starting to be rolled out in [Southland](#) and [Waikato](#) from the 1st of August. As per the regulations, farmers in those parts of the region, where regulations have come into effect, will be developing plans to submit for certification within 18 months.

To enable the certification and auditing steps, the councils need a number of skilled certifiers and auditors (initially in Southland and Waikato). This is where AsureQuality's role comes in. AsureQuality have been appointed to develop the process for people to become certifiers and auditors of freshwater farm plans. This is referred to as the appointment programme. The certifier's role in the freshwater farm plan system is to assess whether a plan meets certification requirements, and the auditor will audit a farm for compliance with its certified freshwater farm plan.

As the Appointment Process Manager (APM), the AsureQuality team manage the certifier and auditor appointment process on behalf of councils. This includes:

- the appointment application process, training services and on-farm practical assessments
- application assessments and recommendation of applicants for certifier and auditor appointment to the council if an applicant meets the criteria for appointment
- maintaining the national register of appointed certifiers and auditors
- the quality review process for the appointment system
- the continued practice requirements for certifiers and auditors
- all disputes and complaints against certifiers and auditors.

### Meet the team

We are pleased to introduce you to Greg Reid and Gemma Ager from AsureQuality who are looking after the appointment programme.



**Greg - The Technical Manager**

*Tell us a little about yourself (background, family, favourite hobbies)*

Born in Hastings, my career has been all over NZ and predominantly in primary industries - especially in food and regulatory sectors. I need to work on my BBQ technique, but it's been so wet that I have had to move into wine appreciation instead. It's tough but you do what you need to - right? I am a beginner knife forger and have a massive DIY to-do list to wrestle with too.

*What is your role in this freshwater farm plan appointment process and what does role entail?*

I am the technical manager and work in the freshwater farm plan appointment process management team. My role focusses on the procedural framework and specification for the process that will be followed to appoint freshwater farm plan certifiers and auditors. We also have some additional processes in the quality assurance and review processes as well, supporting councils implement the regulations.

*What are your top tips for people interested in becoming a certifier and/or auditor?*

Make sure you have all your info ready when you go to start your application, so you don't have to start stop etc. First, do the obvious background reading - the regulations especially. There is a bunch of info across the various websites. Take the time to work through this info, and then look at the application website at [www.farmplan-certifiers.nz](http://www.farmplan-certifiers.nz) to see what's required and how to start the process.

*What can people expect during the process that you are most excited about?*

We have tried to create a smooth application process that will give applicants a good experience - but we need feedback about your experience. Developing a process that everyone has confidence in is important and we hope that's what we have achieved thanks to the contributions from all the collaborators and subject matter experts that have contributed.

*If people are having any problems with the process, how can they get some help?*

Contact the team via [farmplan-certifiers@asurequality.com](mailto:farmplan-certifiers@asurequality.com)

*And finally, what is the most rewarding part of this mahi for you?*

Doing this work to enable the regs to come to life is pretty important.



**Gemma - Programme Coordinator**

*Tell us a little about yourself (background, family, favourite hobbies)*

I'm Gemma, originally from Yorkshire in the UK (I've got the accent to prove it). I've not been here too long having moved over in 2021 during the MIO days with my other half. I'm a health and fitness fanatic and take any opportunity I can get to be out in nature while listening to a good podcast. I'm boring on paper but more fun in person.

*What is your role in this freshwater farm plan appointment process and what does role entail?*

I'm the programme coordinator for the freshwater farm plan appointment process, and my role is to guide our certifier and auditor applicants through the appointment process as seamlessly as possible, ensuring clear communication at every step.

*What are your top tips for people interested in becoming a certifier and/or auditor?*

Preparation is key to a quick application process that can be done in one hit. Have your documents scanned and ready, and examples to hand that demonstrate your understanding of the competencies. Also feel free to provide as much supporting documents and information as you feel is necessary.

*What can people expect during the process that you are most excited about?*

Clear and open lines of communication, and a great level of service.

*If people are having any problems with the process, how can they get some help?*

First point of call will be the website for all the guidance and information. But if you can't find what you are looking for drop me an email at [farmplan-certifiers@asurequality.com](mailto:farmplan-certifiers@asurequality.com).

*And finally, what is the most rewarding part of this mahi for you?*

Being part of something that will give effect to Te Mana o Te Wai. Improving the quality of freshwater and our environment.

### Key dates and timelines

From 1 August a [new website](#) is available which includes everything you need to know about the programme, how to become a certifier and/or auditor, the application form as well as FAQs. Certifier applications are now open for Waikato and Southland and we are ready to receive applications. Auditor applications will open soon and we will keep you informed with updates. Applications for additional regions will follow as the regulations come into effect within those regions.

During the design of the certifier and appointment programme, we have held discussion groups and workshops to capture feedback and input to create the best experience possible for people - thank you to those that have been involved in this.

Note that we are continuing to collate feedback throughout the initial rollout phase of the appointment programme (Aug - Dec 2023). We will use this information to improve the application process and ensure a nationally consistent programme.

The chart below illustrates the expected timeline during the initial phase of the programme:



Certifier applications are open now for Waikato and Southland. Applications for additional regions will follow as the regulations come into effect within those regions.



### FAQs

There is a full list of [FAQs](#) and information on the website, a few of these include:

#### How do I apply and what do I need?

Visit [www.farmplan-certifiers.nz](http://www.farmplan-certifiers.nz) and select Apply Here which will link to the online application form. It is important that you have all your information ready to go to demonstrate how you have the competencies and qualification criteria.

You will need to complete a self-assessment of your current level of understanding for each of the competencies for certifiers as outlined within the freshwater farm plan regulations, and demonstrate your understanding of the competencies using scenarios, explaining key concepts, and using technical terminology relevant to the competencies.

Strong answers for the written explanation of each competency will include specific examples linking your qualifications and/or experience to the competencies.

It is not expected that applicants will be experts in all the competencies at this stage of the appointment process, as training linking across all the competencies will be provided. However, you must:

- have comprehensive farm systems knowledge and understanding of how contaminants from farming activities impact freshwater
- read and understand relevant freshwater legislation and the relevant regulatory documents and be familiar with council planning documents and legal documents such as resource consents
- have basic knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi and key concepts such as Te Mana o Te Wai and Te ao Māori.

#### What happens if my application is successful?

If your application is successful, you will move to the next stages of the programme which includes:

- national training - expected to take 8-16 hours online
- regional training - expected to take 8-16 hours mix of online and face to face
- practical assessment - expected to take 2 days to complete the whole process.

Upon successful completion of all these stages, you will receive a recommendation for appointment to the councils. The final step involves the council's decision to officially appoint you.

#### When will auditor applications open?

Auditor applications will open soon. If you are interested in becoming a freshwater farm plan auditor, please contact the team directly at [farmplan-certifiers@asurequality.com](mailto:farmplan-certifiers@asurequality.com).

#### How much does it cost to become a certifier and/or auditor?

The costs are detailed on the website, click [here](#) for certifier and [here](#) for auditor.

### How to contact us

New Zealand has highly competent and passionate rural professionals working with our farm operators, and we look forward to supporting as many people as we can to become appointed as freshwater farm plan certifiers and auditors.

Let's get behind the programme and help our farm operators keep up the great mahi underway on their farms for the care and protection of our environment.

Ngā mihi

AsureQuality APM team

AsureQuality - [farmplan-certifiers@asurequality.com](mailto:farmplan-certifiers@asurequality.com)  
Ministry for the Environment - [freshwaterfarmplans@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:freshwaterfarmplans@mfe.govt.nz)

Waikato Regional Council - [rio@waikato.govt.nz](mailto:rio@waikato.govt.nz)  
Environment Southland - [farmplans@es.govt.nz](mailto:farmplans@es.govt.nz)



